US PREP

Renewing Educator Preparation

Communication Plan Guide

Communication is critical to the success of transformation efforts. Proactive communication has the potential to engage supporters of the educator preparation program and strengthen success toward transformation goals. Conversely, poor or limited communication can lead to a breakdown of efforts and become a barrier to scale. Developing and enacting a communication plan is a dynamic process that requires proactive planning with clear goals, continuous self-evaluation and updates based on successes or opportunities for improvement. This guide outlines communication plan considerations, including, but not limited to: Establishing the core message, defining audiences to engage, preparing the timeline, and personalizing communication messages and modes.

Communication Plan Steps

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Establish Main Goals & Core Message	Identify & Define Audiences	Set Timeline, Modes, and Goals	Develop Message Content	Evaluate Impact & Update

Step 1: Establish Communication Plan Goals and Core Message

- What **Main Goals** do we hope to achieve through our communication plan and how will this promote our transformation goals?
  - Be specific so success can be measured
  - Align to transformation goals and other initiatives
  - Clearly name the 'Call to Action' (the action(s) stakeholders should take)

- What is the **Core Message** we want to ensure gets conveyed? (think the WHY)
  - Engage stakeholders in the transformation work
    - Convey the WHY (higher purpose) and relevance of the transformation (to teacher candidates & to children)
    - Include data that ensure all know the issues that are being addressed through transformation
    - Consider what will ***motivate*** stakeholder(s) to engage in the work and take action
  - Be clear and concise
    - Outline main points
    - Highlight the name of the new program
    - Align to transformation goals and other initiatives
    - What message would we want informally passed on to others second or third hand? Consider how unclear or lengthy messages can change over time. By being clear and concise with the Core Message, it will be more likely to sustain through informal communication channels.

Step 2: Identify and Define Audiences

- When identifying your audience members, consider:
  - Who makes decisions that would affect the transition plan? Consider both formal and informal decision makers/leaders.
  - Who is most affected by the transition plan in a positive way? In a potentially negative way?
  - Whose knowledge, attitudes and behavior might be impacted and/or leveraged when engaging in transformation work?

- Group your audiences:
  - **College Administration (President, Provost, etc.)**
    - Highest level of information needed, purpose of the transformation
  - **EPP Decision-Makers**
    - Highest level of information needed
    - Will decide which information is shared with which audience (see Step 3)
    - Will decide the Communication Feedback Loop among all audiences (see Step 3)
  - **EPP Implementers**
    - Need to know the Core Message
    - Need to know specific information as it relates to their role
    - Need to be included in the feedback loop to ensure Decision Makers have the details they need to be successful
  - **Students in the College of Education**
    - Need to know the Core Message
    - Need to know specific information as it relates to their involvement in the program (current, pilot or future scale)
    - Need to be included in the feedback loop to ensure Decision Makers have the details they need to be successful
  - **District Partners**
    - Need to know the Core Message
    - Need to know specific information as it relates to their role
    - District assigned point person needs to be included in the feedback loop to ensure Decision Makers have the details they need to be successful (Governance Meetings)
  - **Supporters**
    - External audiences either within the IHE, or external to the IHE (e.g. Districts, state-level agencies or organizations,community members, etc.) who can influence or support transformation
    - Need to know the Core Message

Step 3: Set Timeline, Modes and Goals for Communication

- Set timelines for key milestones:
  - Prior to launch of pilot; Orientation
  - Announce district and IHE partnership
  - Post Scale Planning
  - Governance Meetings
  - Data Days
  - Quarterly Progress Checks
- Establish Communication Feedback Loop among all audiences
  - Consider when information needs to be gathered to inform decision making
  - Assign a designee(s) to monitor the communication loop to ensure on-going information is conveyed
- Consider how you will communicate with each audience. Some examples:
  - In person meetings
  - Professional development
  - Newsletters
  - Email blasts
  - Social media
  - Local media
- Document communication decisions for clarity and follow through. Here is an Example timeline and template. Be sure to include:
  - The timeline
  - The topic
  - The mode
  - The point of contact (POC)/person responsible for the communication
  - Periodic self-evaluation of successes or challenges with communication

Step 4: Develop Message Content for Audiences

- Audience Considerations:
  - For each of the audiences identified in Step 2:
    - Describe what is known about this audience's knowledge, motivations, attitudes and behaviors as they relate to transformation.
    - What are the barriers to this audience in fully supporting or participating in transformation?
    - What are the benefits of supporting transformation?
    - What changes in attitude about transformation will motivate this audience?
    - What changes in behavior and day-to-day actions might need to occur?
- Information Considerations:
  - Consider the information shared as it relates to:
    - The Core Message
    - The implications for the targeted audience
    - Questions the audience might have
    - The level of detail needed for the audience
    - Whether this is an opportunity for feedback from the audience (either in person or electronically)

Step 5: Evaluate Impact and Update

- Periodically revisit the timeline to evaluate impact:
  - Identify communication successes
  - Remain accountable to goals that were set in the timeline
  - Identify opportunities for greater communication
  - Prepare for upcoming milestones by reviewing Step 3
- Update the communication plan as needed:
  - Adjust the timeline, mode, audience and/or message accordingly
  - Schedule additional opportunities for evaluating the impact of the communication plan